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Subject: Conduct the Index of Feeling.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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Messrs. J. B. Ford & Co.:

Gentlemen: Mr. T. J. Ellinwood has been the reporter of my sermons for some ten years; and he is the only authorized reporter of them. The sermons which you are printing, week by week, from his hand, are published by you alone, and are the only ones which go before the public with my consent.

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT.

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CONDUCT THE INDEX OF FEELING.

SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 21, 1869.

INVOCATION.

WE thank thee, our heavenly Father, for the light of this pleasant morning, and for all the circumstances of great mercy with which thou hast called us hither. We thank thee for the memories that do not fail to arise in this place, for the hopes which here brighten, for the strength which we have received, and for the hope that we have of strength yet to be imparted. Vouchsafe to us this morning the evident token of thy presence—of the Holy Spirit. Quicken our affection. Give us access to thee by the understanding, by faith, by love, and by joy in the Holy Ghost. We ask it for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

"IF ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."—JOHN xv. 10–16.

THESE are the commands of our Saviour to his disciples, including the whole duty of love. You will be struck with the fact that, while he laid down the commandment to love one another and him, the specifications of this command were all, "Keep my commandments." He commanded, apparently, an emotion; but he interpreted that command into obedience, and into an obedience of his laws.

This question of loving, the experience of it, how to attain, how to augment it, how to test it, and to discriminate a high and spiritual love from one of self-indulgence, or of self-deception, is a question of vital moment, and to some souls of great perplexity and trouble. It is not difficult to love; but how to love one not seen; how, in the presence of the divine truth of Christ, to force a heart that does not itself rise spontaneously into the quick and controlling state of affection; what lever to put under it, what inspiration to give it—that is the question. Must one wait for it as for a gift of the Spirit of God? Is it the result of volition? Can one cultivate it? Can one be a Christian

LESSON: John xv. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 243, 424, 233.

without it? And yet, how is one to blame if, having used all ordinary means—reading and prayer—it still does not come to him? These, and a thousand like questions, are in the hearts of many, and carry perplexity.

That the men who lived with Christ should have loved him seems very natural. But how shall we who have never lived with him, to whom he is an imaginary being, love him? And yet it stands upon record that the disciples, after he went from them, were moved with far more strength of affection than when they beheld him. His presence with them did not excite so strong an emotion of affection as took possession of them after he was gone. The imagined and the invisible had more power upon them, as a matter of fact, than the present and the visible. To be sure, one may say, "They had seen him, however, and they retained the image and the memory." But Paul, by far the most intense in his affection of any, had never seen the Saviour except in a miraculous vision. He had never consorted with him. He had no such personal acquaintance as these others had. And yet he left them far behind in the strength of his affection for the departed Saviour.

It is, too, an unquestionable fact that from age to age since the day of Christ, men in great numbers have loved an unseen and absent Saviour. It has been a strong feeling—nay, the controlling element of their life. It is true that single instances are found in all heroic nations of men that have, by some strong feeling, been led to the utmost self-denial, to the utmost achievement, to suffer pain for long periods of time; but multitudes of men, consistently and together, have never been inspired except under Christian influences to a total revolution of their lives within and without. Since the days of our Saviour, there is not one thing that men ever did that is right which they have not received an impulse to do from the love that they sustain to an unseen but a believed God. In ten thousand hearts to-day there is a sacred flame of which the subject has no more doubt than he has of his eye-sight. There are here, there are in every worshiping Christian congregation, there are, I fain hope, in every sect in the whole great band of Christendom, those who know that they do not love father and mother more than they love God, though they love them differently. There are multitudes who, much as they love their offspring, know that their children are not dearer to them than the Saviour, though they are dear in a different way. So that the fact stands recorded, in a multiplicity of instances, well attested by men whom you believe in every thing else, that it is possible to love Christ with an all-controlling love, though you have never seen him, though you have no such personal acquaintance with him as you are able to gain and to maintain among your fellow-men. The fact that your

Saviour is susceptible of such a love as this stands almost uncontradicted. It is the knowledge of this experience in others, and the belief that there is such a love possible, that leads men into difficulty. Sincere moral natures, who are earnest to live a godly life, seeing that such a thing is possible, and that men round about them possess it, and are greatly rejoiced in its possession, put the question to themselves, "Why do not I love Christ? I wish to; I strive to; I read; I pray; I take every method that is within my knowledge; I have asked my spiritual advisers; I have asked those that have learned the way; and why is it that they love, and I can not? I am willing to give up any thing. I am willing to do any thing. If I have miscarried hitherto through ignorance, enlighten me, and I will perform that which is right." There are a great many sincere natures of this kind. Some of the noblest of men, some of those who are the truest to their own affections, stand saying, "Show us the better way, and we will enter upon it." They pray for love. They say in themselves, "Love is a fire that no man has and is ignorant of. This is a penetrating experience about which, if a man has it, he scarcely can be in any doubt." Under this general impression, they still crave, *crave*, CRAVE emotion—the emotion of love; the fire of the Holy Spirit burning on the altar of their souls. They even come to believe themselves unregenerate and unspiritual, because never have they had the flash or flame of experience such as others have in this direction. Conscientious in purpose, careful in conduct, earnest in spirit, studious evermore of right ways, hoping yet to reach an experience of love, but never attaining to that hope, they live under a cloud.

But if they knew minutely the history of Christ, two things would stand out from the analysis of the experience of those round about them: first, that very often those who have the emotion of love to Christ, who have ecstatic pleasure in the view of Christ, are neither in disposition Christ-like more than their fellows, nor in the whole type of their character so high as many who have not their fervid experiences. I do not wish, I should not attempt, to lead them to think that it was a matter of indifference whether they had fervid Christian emotion as such. It is certainly true that there be many persons that have the emotive love to Christ strongly developed who do not reach as high in Christian experience as those that do not have it. And there is something to be said about that.

Secondly, they would find that there are many calm, unemotive natures who, as a matter of fact, do really live nearer to Christ, and in an important sense love without any disclosive emotions of love.

This would seem to indicate that there are two styles of Christian character, one of which exists with emotive love, and the other without it. But it would be a mistake if any one should so infer.

The fact that there are these two general types of experience will throw light on the nature, not only of love, but of all feelings.

Consider, then, first, that love to Christ, spiritual love, is the love of men's higher faculties. It is not such a love as we have to our companions, where it is difficult to discriminate how much the senses add, and how much of reason, how much of moral sentiment, how much of spiritual sympathy, and how much of the auxiliary, though interior loves of the body, go with it. There is no corporeity in the divine nature; and we do not love with the body, nor with any of its auxiliary passions. The love that we are to sustain to a higher being must therefore be one of reason, and one of spirit—not of the passions and of the lower nature. It more resembles a child's love for its parents. When that child has grown to years of knowledge, aside from the love of nourishing, and the habit which comes from loving those that have loved us, it dawns into some estimate of his father's true character, and his mother's royal goodness. You can scarcely conceive of any affection on earth that is more pure, more divested of selfishness, and more entirely a sentiment and a noble sentiment, than that which an intelligent child, growing up into man's estate, has for his father and his mother. And I apprehend that the love which the soul has for Christ comes nearer to this than we imagine, and that there is more meaning than lies upon the surface of it when we are told that we must become as little children, and that unless we become like them, and love God as they love their parents, we can not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Consider, too, that aside from the explanation which this different style of affection casts upon the experience, all mere feeling—and that is what people are striving after—all mere emotion, is short-lived as an emotion. Like waves, our feelings may continue by repeating themselves, by intermittent rushes; but no emotion, any more than a wave, can long retain its own individual form. It must submerge, and come up again. This is the law of the very strongest natures. A part of the divine economy in the human mind as plainly indicated as any other, is, that feeling can not exist for any considerable length of time, as a mere pure emotion.

You can draw a stop in the organ and press any note—for instance, in the flute-stop—and as long as the engine below shall furnish wind to the wind-chest, so long that flute note will sound forth. All day, and all night, and all to-morrow, it will continue to sound, if you keep the engine going. There is no assignable limit to what a pipe can do. But men are not pipes, such that you can touch a stop of feeling in the human soul and have that feeling go on breathing like an organ-note forever and forever. So no one ever felt, and so no one ever will feel. If ever any one has that continued feel-

ing, you may be sure that he is on the turnpike to the lunatic asylum. The very name that we give to one form of insanity is *monomania.* In other words, it has been found that it is so contrary to the nature of the human mind for any emotion to continue incessantly, that when by disease it does do so it destroys the sanity of the mind itself; it takes the balance away from it; and the subjects of it are candidates for medical treatment. They are *monomaniacs*, or under the dominion of one single feeling which is acting on them continuously. And yet, there is a current impression that if a man is a real Christian, and loves Christ once, that one feeling of love to Christ will shine out as steadily from his experience as the sun shines all day out from the hemisphere above. They do not stop to consider that this is contrary to nature, and contrary to the decree of God. No feeling can be unintermitted. No feeling can act as an emotion, or as a feeling, except for a little time. It is the most exhausting, the most wasteful, of all modes of squandering the resources of the nervous system.

But all feelings in wholesome natures tend instantly to some form of expression or action; and the moment a feeling takes expression in action its nature changes. It is transmuted. Even in the lowest ordinary feelings, and in uncultivated natures, a strong feeling tends to take on some shape, if it be only speech; or, even lower than that, inarticulate sound. The outcries of savages, the oriental tearings of hair, and of the garments—these are but attempts of nature to change an emotion into something other than an emotion; to transmute a feeling. When it is transmuted, it ceases to exist as an emotion; and yet the faculty is not impaired after the feeling is changed into something else. The faculty that generates feeling is strengthened, so that the transmutation be normal and proper. Strong feelings with no outlet become diseased. With an outlet, and a legitimate expression, they relieve themselves of the emotion; but the faculty is stronger than it was before. This is a mere matter of fact. It is a very important element in philosophy, because it solves a great many questions about which people inquire; as, for instance, why it is wrong to read fictions. It is not. That happens to be the occasion. It is a mere external condition under which another state of facts takes place, namely, that if men have strong feelings excited in them for a long time which they do not transmute into any other thing than an emotion, it is unhealthy. Momentary experiences of strong feelings are not unwholesome. On the contrary, they are frequently cleansing and inspirational. But to be under the dominion of emotions for any considerable time, which die in you as emotions, but produce nothing, do not change themselves into intellectual conditions, do not change themselves into volitions, do not

change themselves into courses of government—that is unwholesome. And because this takes place in reading exciting stories, or fictions, men think it is the fiction that is harmful. It is just as bad to read newspapers, (which you may say are only fictions split up infinitely.) Reading any thing, whether it be history, or novels; whether it be moral books, or the most entertaining of oriental stories—whatever it is—the point is not that it is fact or that it is fiction; but it is, that any thing which excites deep and continuous emotion, giving it no chance to transmute itself into intellection, volition, or conduct, injures the mind itself. That is the point of difficulty.

A healthy, normal and noble affection is one which soonest takes on the form of action, and soonest loses the form of emotion. So far from emotion being, then, the highest form, it is but the initial form. It is the unripest state. And the moment that the strong feeling is thoroughly developed, it is better for the feeling, and better for you, that it should instantly cease to exist as an emotion, and that it should reappear in some other mental condition or quality.

The strength and the purity are not to be measured by the nervous disturbance which exists in our system. Men think that they love in proportion as they feel the fire of love; as they feel their pulse quickened; as they feel their brain flash with fire. Men think that they love God just in proportion to the disturbance and the exaltation which they have. That, however, is but the initial condition of the higher state. Men are apt to think that they are intensely Christians when they have an intense emotion of any Christian kind. They forget that the emotion is but the beginning, and that the wholesomeness and the regularity of it, and the benefit of it, are to be judged, not by the intensity of the beginning of the feeling, but by the result of that feeling when it has gone round the whole circuit, and wrought itself out into conduct, thought, and purpose. So that there are a great many persons that are sent off like rockets at the touch, almost, of religious teaching. Men there are whom a hymn will set almost spiritually drunk. Hymns which come sighing through the passages of memory to them, and in which they hear the voices of father and mother, and brethren and friends beloved; hymns that lift the soul up into the memory of all the assemblies in which they have been sung—to sensitive natures, to moral natures, such hymns frequently give wings by which they fly away so high that they forget to come back again to the ground and perform their duties. They sing themselves into the air, and there they stay. I have seen persons that had so exhausted themselves by religious emotions that they had no strength left for religious duties.

Every particle of feeling that you have more than you can reduce to conduct and volition is so much surplusage. An engineer wants

to have head of steam enough; but he knows very well that if he has so much that he is obliged to throw it off at the whistle, at the safety-valve, and at the smoke-stack, he is racking the engine uselessly. Five pounds more steam than you want is five pounds against you—not five pounds for you. Some men are so constituted that the least touch of feeling sets them all aflight. They are unfortunate until by training they can reduce emotion to some more useful and practical result than merely emotion. But that is not the current impression. People think that that is the Christian who lies back in his chair and has glorious visions and experiences. "Oh! such a good time, such a joyful time, as I have had!" a man says. Well, let me see him a day or two afterward, and I can tell better whether it is a genuine Christian experience or not.

Here is a man that has had a quarrel. He never has lost a chance to say an ugly thing, or to have an ugly thing said against him; and his wife and children have taken it up; and here is a set of families that have warm times. They are as spiteful as cats and dogs, and they throw sparks like a blacksmith's forge all the time. And yet this man is a roaring good Christian. He goes to meeting. There is a revival; and his religious feelings are all aglow. And it is all right. He does feel just as he says he does. There is no hypocrisy in his profession. He takes his hymn-book, and the minister happens to be fortunate, and the hymn comes right home, and circumstances concur, and the electric influences are favorable, and the meeting is a joyous one, and he won't go home until twelve o'clock. He has sung twenty hymns; and he does feel as though he could not keep himself on the ground. "A little more, Lord," he says, "and I shall fly away." Now, I want to see if to-morrow he will go to that neighbor, and say, "Look here, my dear fellow, we are wrong—at any rate I am, whether you are or not. I have been ugly. Forgive me. I had such a good time last night, that I must clean my heart. My pride must come down, my vanity must come down, and I must be reconciled to you." He did have a good time, and that is the sign that the feeling which he experienced was genuine. That he roared his hymns joyfully was no sign of it; that he had an ecstasy of prayer was no sign of it; but that, having that elevation, he changed it to a moral purpose; that out of that feeling he wrought garments of duty; that out of that experience he came back to his fellow-men more sympathetic, more gentle, more humble, more Christlike—ah! that was a sign that the feeling was a genuine one. Otherwise it would have been simply a sign of self-indulgence. A man that takes his excess of moral, social, and religious excitement, to raise the tone of his moral and emotive feelings, is just as dissipated as if he raised

the tone of his physical feelings by physical stimulants. I am not instituting a comparison as to which is the better and which is the worse. I merely say that one is intemperance just as much as the other, though one is grosser than the other, and is more disastrous in undoing the very structure of the body itself. And men ought to be made to understand that there is such a thing as moral intoxication, and that a man can take a religious feeling, and that he can—what shall I say?—imbibe and imbibe, and imbibe, for no other reason than because it feels so good. It is a self-indulgence. It is a luxury—a higher luxury, to be sure. And he imbibes, and imbibes, and is more joyful. He is not a better man; but he is a much happier man. And he imbibes, and imbibes, until by and by he swigs, and swigs, and swigs; and the man is besotted. I have seen men that were literally debauched at the top of their brain, and who had gone into a systematic self-indulgence. They never were happy except under circumstances where they had this peculiar form of enjoying themselves.

If I found that the whole form of this enjoyment was a mighty spring that was pressing them toward self-denial for the sake of their fellow-men; if I found that it was scouring their morals white as snow; if I found that it was multiplying the avenues of their usefulness; if I found that they were gentle and meek in following Christ—then I should say that there was no debauch there, that there was no moral intemperance there. Feeling which, beginning as feeling, has transmuted itself into life and conduct, and has become wholesome—that is genuine piety; that is true Christian character; but the mere feeling without the transmutation is nothing of the kind, and it is not desirable. If it is not going to be transmuted into any thing but emotion, it is not only an undesirable thing, but it is a dangerous thing.

Let us take instances that are familiar to us in common life. A man sits in his door, and sees a bully abusing a child that is weak, gentle, mild and meek; and the man is terrifically indignant; he fairly swears with rage, to see such an abominable bully abuse such a helpless, nice boy. A very staid and quiet apprentice in a shop near by witnesses the occurrence. He does not feel half so much indignation, but he drops his tools, and claps on his paper cap, and rushes out into the street, and knocks that bully, and sends him sprawling to the ground; and when three or four of the bully's companions come out to help him, the apprentice squares up to them, and appalls the whole of them, and he rescues that boy. I should like to know which of these two men felt indignation best and most salutary. One felt it in his *heart*, and the other felt it in his *fist*. In one it took on the form of helpless protest—the form of lazy indignation in a lazy man. And so he sat and reeked with indignation. The other man transmu-

ted his indignation into a fire which carried him out and made him the champion and protector of the weak, and the punisher of the oppressor. I say that the last feeling was the healthy feeling—the feeling that took on the form of action instantly.

Take the case of men that felt for their flag in the great conflict. In the North there were hundreds of thousands of men that told us they loved the flag; yes, they revered the flag. When it was desecrated, and hung trailing in shame under assault from intestine treason, what did they? Nothing. Still they revered the flag! Hundreds, thousands, millions, perhaps, there were who had less feeling, but who took their musket, and, shoulder to shoulder, went into the field. They showed what they thought of the flag by what they did, or what they suffered.

But do you tell me that a man who patiently, and without any overflow of patriotic feeling, did his duty right straight through the war did not have any feeling? He had feeling; but it transmuted itself into action. And was not that a great deal better form of feeling than feeling with no action sequent upon it? Here are in a great battle thousands of men wounded and scattered all over the field; and the calmest, the coolest, the most unfeeling men on the whole ground are the surgeons. Pale, cold, are they. They are perfectly collected. Their voice does not tremble. They are decisive, and at times almost fierce. What is it? Do not they feel humanity? Probably there is no man on the whole ground that feels it so much. But the intensity of their feeling transmutes itself into instant activity. And the sign that they feel is what they are going through, or what they are doing. There is no room for more feeling. They change it into the better form in which feeling should always seek to develop itself.

The plague-stricken city has a great many persons that are sentimentally affected by the sufferings of the poor; a great many that feel very much for the poor; and the feeling is expended in "Ohs!" and "Ahs!" of persons that are getting ready with all their might to go off into the country.

Then there is, next to them, another and a better class, that feel great compassion for the sufferings of the plague-stricken city; and while they are going off to the country, they set apart five hundred or a thousand dollars to alleviate those sufferings. They buy themselves the liberty of going off. There is a slight transmutation of feeling, by as much as they were generous, and changed an emotion into an act.

But here was a poor simple creature, that never dreamed of going off, and went to the physician and said, "I am expert as a nurse; let me go down among the poor, to those that have nobody to look

after them. And so, night and day, with simplicity, she carries a cheerful face and a helpful hand; always calm, never excited, but earnest in good work. Do not you suppose that she had more feeling, though she showed less, than either of the others? Did she not convert feeling into conduct just as fast as it was generated? And was not that the reason that it did not overswell and flow back into the form of mere emotion?

There is, then, what might be called latent emotion, or rather a form in which the disposition and the emotions can show themselves, not by mere nervous vibrations, but by being transmuted into a nobler and better shape.

Go back, now, to the chapter from which I selected my text—for I read a part of that chapter on purpose that I might illustrate this point. Do you notice how many times our Saviour says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments"? It is as if a child should rush passionately to its mother and throw its little arms around her neck and hug her, and say convulsively, "O mother! I do love you so!" "Well, my dear child, if you do, why are you not a better child?" How many times is that heard in the family! Our Saviour said the same thing. "If ye love me, do not suppose that that is love which goes off into an enthusiasm, an emotion, a paroxysm, a flash of joyous feeling. That is very well; but if you love me, let your feelings take on the shape of life, disposition, conduct." And afterward, how many times was it said by his apostles, in various shapes, that the evidence that we love Christ is that we love the brethren; that we keep the commandments. "But if a man has feeling, will not you know it by the fact that it is feeling?" No, not if he changes it so fast into conduct and disposition that that is the way in which it is showing itself more than in any other.

He, then, that loves Christ aright may come from either direction. A man that loves Christ aright may be so organized that he shall love Christ naturally and easily—and that is a mere accident, if I may so say. There is no virtue in your organization, so far as you are concerned. If you inherit a good organization, an organization peculiarly sensitive in the direction of emotion, it is no credit to you that your emotions come quick and are overflowing. If with this joyous organization you are so wise as to change feeling continually into disposition, volition, and self-denying conduct; if you take the example of Christ and pattern your conduct on it, and put all your feeling in the shape of emotive power to control you in that Christ-like life, then you will have come into the possession of his spirit; it will have been perfected in you, coming from the side of disclosive emotion. But there are, at the other extreme, persons who are naturally slow of feeling; persons in whom caution is strong; persons in

whom reason predominates over feeling; persons who do not go by their emotions first, but who have taken a calm survey of the ground, and say "I am commanded, as a token of love, and as a fruit of love, to obey the laws of the Saviour; I am to imitate his disposition; I am to carry his spirit; I am to work out in my life just what he worked out in his life; and although I have not any great feeling, I have feeling enough to tell me what to do, and how I ought to do it." And they begin to act as men with more feeling act.

Two results follow. First, Christian character follows; and secondly, it is a philosophical fact that if you perform the actions that spring from a certain feeling, the feeling itself will come by and by. You can develop conduct from feeling; and you can also develop feeling from conduct. The man who begins to imitate Christ reverently, childlikely, and continuously, will by and by begin to feel that he has the emotion of love as well as the fruit of love. The fruit is more important, the emotion being latent in the first instance, developing itself only as a motive pressing him to right thought, right feeling, and right conduct. By a patient continuance in well-doing the emotion will grow, so that by and by the man who had only emotional life and conduct will begin to feel that while he is feeling as a Christian, he should also begin to live as a Christian.

Sometimes the light surprises a Christian, as he sings. Or, by and by, a man that is living in the performance of Christian duty will begin to have intuitions, revelations, as it were, of his higher nature. And this is the safer way.

I have tried to popularize as far as I could, or make intelligible, rather, a somewhat subtle, metaphysical doctrine.

Let me still further carry this home, if I have made you understand it, as I trust I have, by a few more practical and broader applications.

First, let such questions as these be used to determine your state in a Christian life: Am I willing to accept Christ's commands? Am I willing, therefore, to find out what they are? Am I sincerely, every day, seeking to frame my disposition according to his commands? Am I moulding my life to benevolence and not to selfishness? Do I imitate Christ's example? Do I practically trust him? Do I trust his daily providence? Do I put my care upon him? Do I every day endeavor, so far as I have light, to act in such a way that if Christ were present with me he would have occasion to know that I was trying to be like him? I do not ask persons to measure themselves, as too frequently they do, by the falsest and the foolishest of all measures—the ideal standard. What would you think of a schoolmaster who should be always talking to the abecedarians in the school about Newton, and Bacon, and Spinoza, and Raphael, and

Michael Angelo, that were removed by a space of forty years from the child? If the child is learning his letters—his A B C's—how absurd it would be to ask him to read in Cicero, or to test him on one of Chatham's speeches! All tests are relative to the state and the condition in which the person is to whom they are applied. And it is unwise for a young Christian that is just beginning a Christian life to take the ideal perfection that belonged to Paul, after an experience of forty years, and say, "I am not a Christian because I have not such feelings, and Paul had." Yes; and how long was it before he got them? It took him a whole lifetime to earn them—and under peculiar circumstances, too. If a person can say, "I take pains to know what my duty is in Christ Jesus; I take pains to study his life and his word, and I am trying," that is enough to start upon. It is the *trying* that is most essential then. It is not the perfection of your work. Am I not a painter because my pictures are poor, if I am trying to make them better? Am not I a speaker because my speeches are short and less than eloquent, if I am trying? Am not I a scholar if I study night and day, though I have not made any great attainments yet? Am I not a follower of my country's flag, though I be lame, though I follow at a distance, if still I make use of all the strength I have, and see which way the army went, and follow on, even fifty miles behind? And if a man takes the example of Christ's life, and spreads that before him, and says, "Lord Jesus, this is what I mean to be, and mean to do," and goes to work at it, inside and out, and tries day by day, is he not a Christian? What if you do fail and come short here? What if you are carried away by temptation there? You are trying, and are trying on an intelligent basis. You have a right standard—namely, Christ, who loves you, and sympathizes with you, and is helping you; you are following after him, and you mourn where you come short; and though for a moment you are discouraged, you pluck up your courage again, and try once more, and say, "I know it is the right way; it is the right character; it is the only thing becoming; and whatever I find to do I will do, and I will try to persevere." And you are a Christian.

When Christ called persons to be his disciples, what did he say? Translated into our modern language, he said, "Come and be my scholars;" or, as in the text of last Sunday morning, "Come unto me; learn of me: I have opened a school for moral character and good conduct. Who wants to join my school?" One applies for admission, and another, and another, and Christ puts them into the schoolhouse and commences teaching them. Some he puts into the alphabet; some are able to read easy words; and some are still further along. And he classifies his school, and each class is tried by the standard which belongs to himself. Every man is practiced in the

thing in which he needs practice. The great trouble is to Christianize pride in some men. In other men it is avarice. In others it is the passions and appetites. In others it is a certain low state of mind —a sort of carnal, sensuous condition, all the way through. Whatever it is, the good Master takes the scholar that comes into his school, and drills him by his providence and his spirit in the thing that he most needs to be drilled in. And the evidence that you are following Christ is, that you are there in his school, and are being drilled, and are trying to obey the teachings of your Master. You are Christ's scholars if you are under his training. You may be a very poor scholar—most of us are poor scholars—but you may be better, having learnt to be better; or, you may be very good. The lowest and the least is a scholar, if his name is on the roll, and he has begun to receive instruction. The uncombed, ragged little wretch, that has hardly got off from the briny sea, having come from the Emerald Isle, and that goes into the mistress's school, and begins to fumble the book, though he never saw the inside of a book before, and begins to learn, is a scholar just as much as the boy that is reaching out his hand to take his diploma and go to the next higher school. He is a scholar, though he has the bulk of his learning yet to acquire And so it is with following Christ. Whoever will go to the Word of God, where four pictures open—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John ; whoever will read the life of Christ just as you would read the life of any other person, and follow that, he is a Christian.

Oh ! how foolish people are, that are wise in every thing else, when they come to religion ! I should like you to bring me back an account of a house. You think of renting one. I will describe the way in which you will bring back an account of that house, if you do it as you read the Bible. You go to the front-door and look at it, and come back and say to me, "That house is on Smith Street ; it has a front-door, two lower windows, two basement windows, three second-story windows and an attic." "Well !" I say, "what else ?" "I did not go in." "But go back and tell me something about the house. That is only telling about the exterior of it." Back you go, and bring back to me a sliver taken from one of the shutters—just as people take a single text in the morning—and say, "There is so much of the house." I say, "You fool !" I send you back again, and you bring me a whole armful of bricks. This time you have brought a good deal more of the house than you brought before. But if a man were to go on in that way forming the idea of a house, and bringing it to me, would he ever get through ? Ought he not to go to the lunatic asylum ?

That is precisely your condition. That is just the way you read the Bible. You get up in the morning, and you say, "It is the calm

of the morning, and I am going over into the city where I shall be tempted, and I must read a little before I start." You do not know exactly where you will read; but you must read somewhere. So you turn over the leaves at random. You happen to stop in the Book of Acts. When you have read eight or ten or twelve verses, you think you will stop. Then you say to yourself, "This is rather pinching the matter; the chapter is not very long, so I guess I will read to the end." The next day, quite having forgotten what you read yesterday, you read a chapter near the beginning of the Gospels. But you do not go back to that spot for months. You do not join what you read on to what you have read.

Suppose a man should read the life of Washington as you read the life of Christ; suppose you should begin the first of January to read the introductory, and read an account of Washington's parents, and lay the book aside, and not touch it again till two years afterward, and then say, "I am reading that life;" suppose that then you should read half a page more; suppose that a month or two afterward, you should read a little more; and suppose, after you have forgotten that, you should read a few paragraphs more; and suppose a few months later, having become tired of reading by course, you should begin at the other end, and read a paragraph there; and suppose that, after a while, you should turn to the middle, and read something there; suppose you should continually skip about, reading a little here, and a little there; what would you know about Washington? If you were asked what you knew of him, you could say that he was a great man; and that would be about all you would know about him.

Who could form any conception of a man's character in the way in which you are attempting to form a conception of the Lord Jesus Christ's character? Is the Bible a string of gold beads each of which has an intrinsic value? Is it like a cluster of diamonds, in which every diamond has an intrinsic value? It is true that there is an intrinsic value in many parts of Scripture; but the life of Christ has a distinctive object, four times repeated that men need not make a mistake. Your soul turns on the knowledge that you have of Jesus Christ; and if any man would know how to love Christ, and how to become like him, and how to follow him, he must take him in the wholeness of the picture. If a man reads his *Tribune* or his *Times* before breakfast, he reads more than the whole evangel of Matthew. You can read the evangel of Matthew in less time than you can sit down and read a modern newspaper. If a man should take a whole evangel, and read it through at one time, he would say, "That is rather over-doing the matter." And yet, the true way to read the life of Christ is to take in the full portraiture; to look at the whole picture; to

bring the whole character up clearly before the mind. No person can form a distinct conception of the Saviour, as he is in the heavenly land, until he gets the data, the basis, from the history of what he was in his earthly estate. When you have read so as to get a clear conception of the Master, of his truths, of his dispositions, and of his commandments, then you begin to show that you love him by making yourself like him; and the measure of your love to him will be found in the measure in which you overcome easily besetting sins.

There is a man—I have one in my mind—who had all his life been an exceedingly narrow, an excessively small, a pinchingly avaricious man. He falls in love with a stately and royal woman, and marries her, to the amazement and confoundation of every body that knows them. People say, "What on earth possessed that woman to marry that man?"

Nobody wonders that he married her; but it is like a pigmy sitting on a royal throne. Gradually he begins to be more noble. And though it is a task for a sparrow to fly like an eagle, yet he begins to fly in larger circuits; and this man begins to remit his stinginess and to throw out certain traits of generosity here and there. And in the course of twenty years he is known in all New-England as a most princely merchant and as a most generous man. That little white-faced man, feeble of understanding, was made mighty by the developing power of love. And if he should take that changed life, and his reputation, and lay them down at the feet of his wife, and say, "There, my dear, is the measure of my love for you," could there ever be such a noble commentary as that?

Now, when you are called to love the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not that you may fly away with fugitive feelings, momentary experiences. Take the frame-work of a right, godly love, of a gentle, humble, meek, sweet character and life, and lay it at the feet of Christ, saying, "There, Lord, now thou knowest that I love thee." You remember how the Saviour tried Peter: "Lovest thou me?" "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." "Feed my sheep." "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." "Feed my lambs." *Do something.* "He saith unto him the third time, Simon, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep." Those three short answers, were all the satisfaction Peter got. *It is very well to* FEEL—that is the interpretation of it—*but let me see you* DO, *and then I will accept it.*

I pass by a second application, cautioning us against the substitution of feeling for actual experience, and will only add one other,

namely, that while there are many who begin their Christian life with a very vivid and well-imagined conception of Christ, there are very many who must begin their Christian life with a comparatively vague and indistinct image of Christ in their minds. If God has given you the formative power of imagination, and you have been well bred and instructed, the probability is that, when you begin a Christian life, there will evermore hang before you some clear and bright conception of Christ, that will make your life easy. But there are many persons who are attempting to be Christ-like, and find it very hard to frame an idea of Christ, and to pray to it, or to think of it.

See how, in actual experience, this condition of facts is apt to work. For a year or two your progress is unsatisfying. You are conscientiously endeavoring to be Christ-like—that is, to frame in yourself Christ's dispositions. But still you complain that your Christ is vague, nebulous. But by and by, when you realize the disposition of Christ, there will begin to spring out of your own interior a personal experience—a clear conception of the divine attributes in Christ Jesus. And little by little there will be the reflex of your own living, and it will hang out before you, so that gradually your idea of Christ will become more fervid, more imaginative. Having first realized it, and then idealized it, and personalized it, you begin to see it clearer. And by and by, as you go on in the divine life, your joy which brought you nearer to him is a painter; your sorrow which he sustained you in is a painter; your faith which you are obliged to live by in many instances is a painter; and your personal experiences which, one after another, have all been experienced of the life that is hid in Chist Jesus will begin to limn the character of Christ. The Christ of your original conception ought never to be so glowing and so glorious as the Christ of your experience. A truly Christian life is one that is not simply framing a disposition here, but out of this disposition a conception also. And the Christ that delivered us; the Christ that sustained us when our babe dropped away from our arms; the Christ that sustained us when we buried our dead, almost hopeless and crushed; the Christ that sustained us when we were in bankruptcy; the Christ that sustained us when all men were against us, and it seemed as though the full breath of winter was cutting through and through; the Christ that sustained us in the hour of despondency; the Christ that stood by us when all men had deserted us; the Christ that was our friend on the sea and on the land, in the prison-house and on the battle-field; the Christ of the household; my mother's Christ; my father's Christ; my brother's Christ; my sister's Christ; the Christ of the lecture-room and of the prayer-meeting; the Christ of all my life, at last begins to rise before me, in my later years. And as I die, I do not go toward the barren and the voiceless land;

I go toward all that my heart has ever known of joy and of nobility. I am living toward myself, and I shall die toward myself; because "for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." And so, at last, when I go to that fatherland—the land of my fathers—I shall not be a stranger; nor shall I need to learn the language of that land; nor shall I need to be introduced to Him that is the Head there. For all my life long I have been learning. And when at last I hear that voice compared with which all music of earth shall be as a dry and cacophonous sound, saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant," then, in that hour of joy, of full possession and of blessed presence, I will cast my crown at his feet, and say, "Not unto me, but unto thy name, be the praise of all that I am, and all that I ever shall be."

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We thank thee, our Father, for all the mercies which thou hast vouchsafed to us through Jesus Christ our Lord; above all, for the knowledge of Christ not only revealed in the flesh, upon a record transmitted to us, but brought near by the Holy Spirit and realized in our own experience. We thank thee that we have in him an ever-present Help; a High-Priest, merciful, having respect to our infirmities, abiding even in our transgression, and rejoicing, not to destroy, but to save. In him is our hope. Not only would we have that precious name and be called thereby, but we desire to grow into the spirit of the Saviour, and more and more to become like unto him.

Grant that we may have interpreted to us, by our own thought quickened by thine, what is the royal way of life, that all our inward motives and dispositions may become acceptable in thy sight, cleansed, purified, made heavenly. Thou hast beheld the struggle which we have waged; thou hast beheld its victories and defeats. By thy faithfulness alone we continue until this time, striving against sin and resisting temptation.

Grant, we beseech of thee, O Lord our God! that the power, the attraction of things good may be more with us than the fear of the penalty of things evil. May we be drawn forward, and not driven forth. May we behold thee, and in filial love desire to obey thee. For thy commandments are not grievous. They that have followed in the right way can bear witness that it is a way of pleasantness, and that its paths are peace. Grant that every one of us may find in a consummated obedience that rest of heart, that satisfaction of our spiritual nature, which we do crave.

Vouchsafe thy blessing to all in thy presence that bring before thee, in the struggle of life, some unsubdued sin against which they supplicate divine help; some passion which may have flashed its light upon them, and left them desolate. Grant to every one that watches against easily besetting sins, and hath, this morning, the tale of complaint, the ear of sympathy, and the hand of help. Open the way to those that desire to walk, and find but darkness or but twilight resting upon their path. May they look up, and behold thee, and be guided by thy star from above, and not by looking down to their own feet. We beseech of thee that thou wilt bless all those, this morning, who desire to be revived in the true spirit of their heart. Wilt thou quicken them by the truth, and by the Holy Spirit. And may they take hold upon that higher life and those nobler experiences which they are pursuing.

Comfort any that are in trouble. Take away their grief, or give them strength to bear it. Give victory to every one in thy presence, in the great warfare of their soul. May none fear to come to thee; for thou art a present help in time of need, and art always helping; and thou hast won the right of being trusted. We desire, in the memory of all our past experiences, knowing that thou hast done abundantly more for us than we have asked or thought, to trust thee, turning away from vain confidence in ourselves, and from overmuch hope. We desire to turn away from all lesser things, and trust thee. For thou art good; thou art wise; thou art ever-present; thou art full of sympathy. We are dear to thee. Thou hast interfered in our behalf, and art perpetually interfering. And thou wilt yet bring us forth victorious over every adversary. We trust thee; we love thee; and we desire to walk ever more in thy paths.

Bless, we pray thee, those households that are here represented. May peace, and purity, and gladness dwell in every one of them. Sanctify to thy people all the dispensations of thy provi-

dence. Grant that joy and prosperity may not corrupt them, nor make them self-seeking. May troubles not daunt them, nor evil harden them. May they gather about them their garments, and gird up their loins, and press forward. We pray that thou wilt comfort those that are in the midst of sharp bereavements. Assuage their sorrow; and may it work cure, as a medicine, to their souls. And we pray that thou wilt bless all that are in perplexity and suspense. And grant, we beseech of thee, help from above, that they may find in thee a peace which passeth all understanding, and a stability which nothing can disturb.

Grant thy blessing to rest upon our brethren of every name—upon all that are gathered together everywhere to-day, to worship thee in sincerity and truth. Save men from their errors. Magnify in them the things that are true and right. Draw thy people together by their common sympathies. Less and less may they become antagonized and divided from each other by the things in which they differ. And we pray that thy kingdom may come in all the world, and that thy will may be done everywhere.

Pity the nations that struggle for their birthright. Pity the weak that are overborne by the hand of power. Give wisdom, perseverance, and courage, and final success to all those that seek for independence, and for the liberty to worship according to their own consciences. Fill the world with thy glory. And to thy name shall be the praise for evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we beseech of thee that thou wilt take us, even as we take our little ones, lost in a perplexed path. How do we sometimes go before them, that they may follow us! How, at other times, do we go behind them to lift them! How do we sometimes hold apart the branches! and how at other times do we encourage them to essay their own strength and their own skill! How do we call them, and urge them to endeavor that they may walk in the right way!

Now, thou art carrying us through the wilderness. Thou art sometimes chastising us, and sometimes rewarding us—but alike in love, whether thou art stern, or whether thou art gentle. We thank thee for thy gentleness toward us. We fain would bless thee by fond affections toward thee. But if we may not feel the intensity of passionate love, we desire to have that feeling which shall work in us likeness to thee. We desire to change our hearts, so that it may not be for our dalliance and enjoyment that we feel, but that it may be shaping and fashioning us into thy blessed image. So may we live in Christ, and for Christ. May he abide in us, and we in him, and all in God.

And to thy name shall be the praise, forever and forever.

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